

Message Text

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R 151640Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY OSLO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6972

INFO AMEMBASSY BERN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L OSLO 2961

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PINS NO

SUBJECT: NORWEGIAN PRIME MINISTER DISCUSSES ISRAELI TER-
RORIST CASE

REF: OSLO 2960

1. THE MOST INTERESTING ASPECT OF MY AUGUST 15 FAREWELL CALL ON PRIME MINISTER KORVALD (REFTEL) CONCERNED ISRAELI'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE RECENT LILLEHAMMER MURDER CASE. THE PRIME MINISTER EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT, WITH YESTERDAY'S EXPULSION OF THE ISRAELI EMBASSY SECURITY OFFICER EYAL, RELATIONS WILL BE STABILIZED WITH ISRAEL. HE IMPLIED THAT HE WAS NOT FULLY CONFIDENT THIS WOULD BE THE CASE, HOWEVER, BY NOTING THAT THE SIX PERSONS ARRESTED FOR COMPLICITY IN THE MURDER ARE STILL TO BE TRIED.

2. MR. KORVALD SAID THAT HIS GOVERNMENT HAS SOUGHT TO DRAW A CLEAR DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE CRIMINAL ASPECTS OF THE CASE, WHICH WOULD BE HANDLED BY THE COURTS, AND THE POLITICAL QUESTION OF INVOLVEMENT WITH THE TERRORISTS. EYAL WAS EXPELLED FOR PUTTING HIS APARTMENT AT THE DISPOSAL OF
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THE TERRORISTS: HIS ADDRESS FOUND IN THE PHONE BOOK OF

THE ARRESTED MEN, THEIR INSTRUCTIONS TO CONTACT HIM IF THEY GOT INTO TROUBLE, AND THE FACT THEY CALLED HIM SHORTLY BEFORE THE MURDER ALL POINTED TO HIS INVOLVEMENT. MR. KORVALD STATED FLATLY THAT NORWAY'S ATTITUDE WOULD BE THE SAME TOWARD ANY COUNTRY WHICH MAINTAINED CONTACTS WITH TERRORISTS.

3. THE PRIME MINISTER DESCRIBED THE OPERATION AS BEING PROFESSIONALLY VERY WELL PLANNED EXCEPT FOR ONE DETAIL: THE SELECTION OF A SMALL TOWN LIKE LILLEHAMMER FOR THE MURDER, WHICH GREATLY FACILITATED THE TASK OF THE NORWEGIAN POLICE. HE EXPLAINED THAT THE ISRAELIS HAD BEEN TRAILING A MAN BASED IN SWITZERLAND (NAMED KEMAL BENEMENE) WHOM THEY BELIEVED TO BE A BLACK SEPTEMBRIST AND WHOM THE NORWEGIAN AUTHORITIES ARE INCLINED ALSO TO CONSIDER A MEMBER OF THAT ORGANIZATION. CONTRARY TO PRESS REPORTS, BENEMENE MET SEVERAL TIMES, NOT ONCE, WITH BOUCHIKI, THE MURDER VICTIM. MR. KORVALD EXPRESSED SOME DOUBT WHETHER THE ISRAELIS HAD KILLED THE WRONG MAN, AS SOME HAVE SPECULATED. HE NOTED THAT BOUCHIKI HAD A LONG HISTORY IN THE ALGERIAN RESISTANCE MOVEMENT.

4. COMMENT: IT REMAINS UNCLEAR WHETHER THE NORWEGIANS HAVE ENOUGH EVIDENCE ON THE ARRESTED PERSONS TO CONVICT THEM IN A COURT OF LAW. NOTHING THAT THE PRIME MINISTER SAID WOULD CONSTITUTE SATISFACTORY EVIDENCE IN ITSELF OF DIRECT COMPLICITY IN A MURDER IN WHICH THE ASSASSINS THEMSELVES ESCAPED. THE PRIME MINISTER PERSONALLY APPEARS CONVINCED OF ISRAEL'S COMPLICITY AND HE SEIZED UPON A RECENT STATEMENT BY THE HEAD OF ISRAELI INTELLIGENCE AS PROOF OF INVOLVEMENT.

5. I AM INCLINED TO BELIEVE THE ASSURANCE GIVEN ME YESTERDAY AT LUNCH BY ISRAELI AMB KEENAN THAT HE PERSONALLY KNOWS NOTHING ABOUT THE CASE. HE ALSO ACKNOWLEDGED, HOWEVER, THAT PEOPLE IN HIS EMBASSY LIKE EYAL DID NOT ALWAYS BRIEF HIM ON WHAT THEY WERE DOING. ONE THING IS CLEAR: ISRAEL HAS HURT ITS GOOD REPUTATION IN NORWAY AND RECENT DIVERSION OF THE LEBANESE AIRLINER CAN ONLY INFLICT FURTHER DAMAGE ON ITS IMAGE. CROWE

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